

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 OMB-01 /110 W

-----061387 270716Z /21

R 251532Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1416

INFO AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION GENEVA

USICA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 2038

KINSHASA FOR RSO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, GB, DM

SUBJECT: BENINESE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY IN GABON

REF: LIBREVILLE 2022 (NOTAL)

1. GABONESE DAILY L'UNION JULY 25 UNDER ARTICLE HEADLINED "AFFAIRE KEREKOU", CARRIES REMARKABLY CANDID AND APPARENTLY ACCURATE COVERAGE OF EVENTS AFFECTING BENINESE RESIDENT IN GABON. DESPITE GENDARMERIE REINFORCEMENTS TO PROTECT PERSONS AND PROPERTY ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, BENINESE SHOPS AT LAMBARENE AND NDJOLE WERE SYSTEMATICALLY SACKED. MOST SERIOUS EVENTS WERE REPORTED TO BE AT PORT GENTIL WHERE THERE WERE "NUMEROUS VICTIMS." PRESS STORY STATES MEN, CONFIDENTIAL

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WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE ENGAGED IN INDISCRIMINATE PILLAGING AND, ALTHOUGH SECURITY FORCES ON THE WHOLE HAVE ACTED CORRECTLY, SOME INDIVIDUALS HAVE ALSO PARTICIPATED. ARTICLE REPORTS THAT OUTSIDE POLICE STATIONS WHERE BENINESE CITIZENS SOUGHT REFUGE, AUTOMOBILES AND PICKUPS WERE BEING SOLD FOR A "PIECE OF BREAD." OVER 4,000 BENINESE WHO HAVE BEEN BURNED OUT, SCARED

OUT OR RUN OUT AND WHO FLED TO THE POLICE FOR PROTECTION
HAVE BEEN TEMPORARILY SETTLED AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL
NEAR THE AIRPORT AWAITING REPATRIATION.

2. IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR HOW GOG WILL GO ABOUT
REPATRIATING BENINESE. COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING YESTERDAY'S
MEETING OF GOVERNMENT AND PARTY OFFICIALS ANNOUNCED
REPATRIATION WOULD TAKE PLACE DURING NEXT FEW DAYS AND
LISTED NAMES OF OFFICIALS CHARGED WITH CARRYING IT OUT.
REPATRIATION COMMITTEE IS HEADED BY PRIME MINISTER AND
INCLUDES SEVERAL MINISTERS (INTERIOR, LABOR, FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, HEALTH, EDUCATION, COMMERCE, FINANCE), AND
PARTY SPOKESMAN CHAMBRIER. COMMUNIQUE ALSO STATES
THAT REPATRIATION WILL NOT EFFECT DOCUMENTED REFUGEES
OR BENINESE WHO HAVE BEEN NATURALIZED (ALTHOUGH SOME
OF LATTER HAVE SUFFERED AS MUCH AS OTHER). OTHER
AFRICAN EXPATRIATES, PARTICULARLY TOGOLESE WHO ARE
SOMETIMES CONFUSED WITH BENINESE, ARE WELCOMED TO STAY.
FINALLY, COMMUNIQUE CALLS FOR GABONESE POPULATION TO
REMAIN CALM. WHAT IT DOES NOT SAY IS HOW REPATRIATION
WILL TAKE PLACE. CERTAINLY BONGO IS NOT GOING TO SEND
HIS AIRCRAFT OR VESSELS LOADED WITH BENINESE TO
COTONOU AND IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT BENINESE GOVERNMENT
WOULD SUPPLY MEANS.

3. COMMENT: LIBREVILLE APPEARS TO BE CONSIDERABLY
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CALMER TODAY WITH MOST OF ACTS OF VIOLENCE UNDER CONTROL.
SECURITY FORCES DO APPEAR TO BE ATTEMPTING PROTECT
BENINESE, MANY OF WHOM HAVE LEFT BY THEIR OWN MEANS, AND
MANY OTHER OF WHOM ARE RESETTLED. USICA EMPLOYEES OF
BENINESE NATIONALITY ARE ALL SAFE FOR THE PRESENT
TIME AND ALTHOUGH SOME HAVE LOST SOME PROPERTY, HAS
HAVE SOME OTHER THIRD COUNTRY AFRICANS WORKING FOR
THE EMBASSY, NONE HAS BEEN PHYSICALLY HARMED. MANY
OF BENINESE WHO WISH TO STAY IN GABON ARE SEEKING
REFUGEE STATUS EITHER FROM GOG OR UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE.
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